DRAFT RSET ISSUE PAPER #30 – Effect Level Question

POLICY COMMITTEE, S. Stirling, Chair
(Stephanie.K.Stirling@NWS02.usace.army.mil); February 17, 2004

QUESTION/ISSUE: Request for RSET Policy Committee Review and Response: submitted by RSET Sediment Quality Guidelines Subcommittee.

1. Shall the RSET SQG Subcommittee assume Site Condition 2 Minor Adverse Effects as the "standard site management condition" for development and recommendation of SL/ML chemical guidelines?

2. If the answer to question 1 is no, should the SQG Subcommittee begin a deliberative process for defining the recommended site biological condition for Lower Columbia unconfined in-water dredged material management?

DISCUSSION: The SQG Subcommittee provided a presentation and recommendations to the RSET at the last meeting, September 24, 2003. The SQG Subcommittee presented initial recommendations to revise the Lower Columbia (LC) Dredged Material Evaluation Framework (DMEF) screening levels (SLs) and maximum levels (MLs) based on recent freshwater sediment quality guideline work completed by the Washington Department of Ecology. Prior to ruling on the adoption of the SQG Subcommittee specific SL and ML recommendations, the RSET asked the SQG Subcommittee for submittal of key "policy" questions related to the definition of the SL and ML for the LC DMEF. The questions below represent the SQG Subcommittee's response to this RSET request.

The LC DMEF SL/MLs are conceptually based on the Puget Sound Dredged Disposal Analysis (PSDDA) Evaluation Procedures Technical Appendix (EPTA,1988). The EPTA provides a substantial discussion in chapter 2 on 5 alternative site management conditions for unconfined, in-water disposal. Importantly, paired biological and chemical guidelines are proposed for 3 alternative site management conditions from which Site Condition 2 was selected. The identified PSDDA SL/MLs are based on selection of Site Condition 2, Minor Adverse Effects on Biological Resources Due to Sediment Chemicals.

The November 1998 LC DMEF specifically defines the SL and ML (see pages 8-9 and 9-5 and Table 8-1) and explains how these are used in a dredged material evaluation framework. In short, the SL and ML are used to avoid "unacceptable adverse effects due to toxicity measured by sediment bioassays." **However, the LC DMEF does not define unacceptable adverse effects in the context of an overall disposal site biological management condition. Unlike EPTA, no discussion of alternative site management conditions for unconfined, in-water disposal of dredged material is provided.**

REFERENCES: EPTA, 1988, DMEF 1998.

RECOMMENDATION: Specific text and table revision to appropriate sections of DMEF.

PROPOSED LANGUAGE CHANGES: None yet.
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